THE MARCH REVOLUTION IN IRKUTSK

AFTER New Year's Day, 1917, Irkutsk was filled with rumors of unrest in Petrograd: strikes, street riots, clashes between the Duma and the government. Suddenly the government decided to get tough with the opposition and arrested workers' representatives in the War Industries Committees—an insane step in view of the role these committees played in expediting the output of munitions and strengthening the morale of the troops. In February the newspapers reported a food shortage and mounting tension in the capital.

In Siberia all was quiet. The political exiles, however, had their troubles. Kniazev had resigned and was succeeded by a reactionary bureaucrat, Pilz, who had been instructed to restore order in Siberia, allegedly endangered by the leniency of the former Governor General. Pilz ordered a cleanup of the exiled intellectuals in Irkutsk. Many of these, however, had more or less essential jobs in the Municipal Council, the banks, city theater, newspapers, and commercial establishments. Yielding to the protests of their employers, Pilz canceled, one after another, all his deportation orders except the one to expel me . . . to the village Jilkino, just across the river, a measure intended to satisfy the gendarmes without interfering with my work for General Koslov's expedition.

Emma had left Irkutsk to visit my mother and sister. I was in bed with the flu when, on March 13, a police officer brought me the order to leave Irkutsk at once. He was satisfied with my reply that I would go as soon as I had recovered. That evening Pilz invited half a dozen prominent local citizens to his office and suggested that they form a committee to deal with any unrest that might develop in Irkutsk. When the citizens replied that they did not anticipate disorder, he said that there was trouble in Petrograd and it might spread. They asked for details, but he replied grimly he had told them all he knew.

On March 14 a telegram reached Irkutsk through the railroad wire system appealing to railroad workers to remain at their posts. It was signed by an organization that called itself the Temporary Committee of the Duma and made no reference to the government. This seemed to indicate that there was no longer a government in Petrograd. Pilz therefore ordered his office to start a file under the heading: *The Change of Power in Petrograd*. That was his last official act.

THE NEW ORDER

That same evening the Irkutsk newspapers received by telegraph the first message of another new organization, the Petrograd Soviet of

